

Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report

St Oswald's Church of England Primary School	
Ronald Ross Avenue, Netherton, Bootle. L30 5RH	
Current SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Diocese	Liverpool
Previous SIAMS inspection grade	Outstanding
Local authority	Liverpool
Name of multi-academy trust / federation [delete as appropriate]	N/A
Date/s of inspection	6 July 2017
Date of last inspection	10 May 2012
Type of school and unique reference number	Voluntary aided 104900
Headteacher	Emma Murtagh
Inspector's name and number	Joanne Abram
Quality assurance	Lyn Field 151

School context

St Oswald's C E Primary School is a one form entry school with two Nursery classes located in the north of Liverpool and is in the bottom 5% of deprived areas nationally. There are 240 pupils on roll. This school is currently oversubscribed. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils or with special educational needs is above the national average. There have been a significant number of staff changes since the last SIAS inspection including the appointment of a new assistant headteacher. The school is linked to St Oswald's Church.

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Oswald's as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The headteacher provides strong Christian leadership supported by assistant headteachers, staff and governors who breathe the Christian vision which extends beyond the school into the local community.
- The school's Christian ethos is promoted throughout the school, creating a harmonious family environment, an oasis of calm, where both staff and pupils are happy and proud of their achievements.
- Every child has a deep understanding of God's love as well as the understanding that they are valued as a member of the school family and the wider community that the school serves.
- The school's Christian values influence its approach to inclusion, resulting in significant impact on the lives and achievements of all pupils, regardless of ability or background.
- The school's culture of prayer, reflection and enquiry enables the pupils to become responsible citizens who are increasingly confident and spiritually aware.

Areas to improve

- Ensure that the quality of teaching and of marking in religious education is consistently of the highest level.
- Improve the strategic development of collective worship by involving pupils in the planning and evaluation to give them greater ownership and support their leadership skills and spiritual development.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting the needs of all learners

The school's mission statement, 'Our school family, where all are valued, is centred on faith in Christ' informs everything the school does. With the location of the school being in the bottom 5% of deprived areas nationally, and approximately 30% of the pupils having special educational needs, its Christian character fully supports its inclusive ethos. This ethos explicitly contributes to pupils' achievement, progress and wellbeing. The school actively promotes good attendance, and with the appointment of a full time parent support advisor who works alongside specific families, the percentage of pupils who are regularly absent is dropping. There have been no permanent exclusions in the past four years as the senior leaders' commitment to keeping pupils in school, where they are safe and thriving, is of paramount importance. The school's values of service, justice, creation, friendship, thankfulness, peace, hope and endurance are distinctively Christian and foster a sense of community that reaches beyond the school gates. They are linked explicitly to biblical teachings and compliment the UNICEF 'Rights of the Child' articles that are interwoven in the school's policies and practice. The children learn of their rights and their subsequent responsibilities as Christians, so that together, the values and articles form a code of conduct that is understood and followed by all. As a result, behaviour is of a very high standard. Through high quality and challenging RE teaching, pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding and a respect for diversity and difference. They fully understand that Christianity is a multi-cultural world faith. This is seen in the school environment, their responses in RE books, through pupil questionnaires and in their inclusive practice that is modelled by all adults. They support a number of charities and are proud of their International School status. A wide range of additional activities, including faith activities, and strong links with St Oswald's church impacts positively on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is particular emphasis on citizenship and training pupils for responsibility, education and employment (TREE Project). Relationships are a strength of the school and are developed as a result of the Christian values that are taught explicitly and are implicit in the way people treat each other. Teachers communicate how proud they are of the school's achievements and how it is a joy to work at the school where the pupils are respectful and polite. Parents speak of their profound respect for all teachers and support staff who make their children feel safe and loved. The school's 'open-door' policy enables parents to feel valued and welcomed. One parent stated, 'I feel like I'm at home because I'm surrounded by friends'. Another shared her view that her daughter was 'a stronger person because of the school's Christian ethos.' Pupils boldly proclaim that they are part of God's family and can articulate how this informs their attitude to learning and their relationships and behaviour towards others.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

Collective worship has a high profile in the life of the school. Excellent use is made of prayer, Anglican readings and responses, Christian symbols, reflection and music to nurture pupils' spiritual development and sense of community. Worship is strategically planned and led by all teaching staff, pupils and the vicar. It helps to develop spirituality and provide 'calm in the day, a time when the school comes together as a family'. The Worship Warriors (pupils), regularly contribute to worship using drama and reflection and as a result, pupils are engaged and responsive. Collective worship makes pupils think more about others (including global communities) and helps children to behave better. One pupil stated that 'If anyone was disrespectful towards God, we wouldn't accept that.' The acts of worship create an atmosphere of spiritual depth whilst still being relevant to the full age range of the school. This includes the Nursery classes who attend 'Mini Church' sessions in church which is well attended by parents. Pupils are very aware of Anglican traditions and understand the Trinity, having three candles to light to develop an understanding of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Children gain a secure understanding of Christian teaching because Christian values, the life of Jesus, Bible stories, religious festivals and the church calendar regularly feature in worship. The centrality of prayer is evident in acts of worship and beyond. Pupils contribute confidently and sensitively to prayer in worship and have other opportunities to develop an understanding of the value of personal prayer and reflection. Examples include the development of prayer spaces, 'Stay and Pray' sessions for pupils and their parents, class prayers, prayer boxes in classrooms and the prayer tree which all facilitate personal prayer for pupils, staff and visitors. Pupils are involved in the evaluation of worship through a pupil questionnaire. Planning, however, is mainly an adult responsibility, providing pupils with few opportunities to contribute. Eucharist services take place in church every half term. Confirmation classes within school facilitate an encouraging number of pupils to be confirmed at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral each year. The school and church's commitment to supporting the pupils' Christian faith and personal spirituality is so profound, that they organise Baptism Services at the parents' request. These services are attended by the families and the whole school community and celebrated in school. Although the links between church and school are strong, worship provides different opportunities in addition to the church's input that enable pupils to develop an understanding of the lives of others. The impact of learning about faiths other than Christianity, and charities such as Shelter and UNICEF, is that pupils develop a deeper awareness and understanding of the world beyond their school.

The effectiveness of the religious education is outstanding

Religious education (RE) has a high profile in the school as it is a core subject, allowing the subject leader time to deliver training, support and induct staff. The Liverpool Diocesan syllabus is followed which provides a good balance between learning about religion and opportunities for children to reflect on what their learning has meant for them. Links between the beliefs and practices of the other world faiths are studied. The school's links with a school in China has facilitated and strengthened this, as pupils have a deeper understanding of other people's lives. RE promotes Christian values and supports the school's TREE project targets. In lessons, pupils further develop their understanding of these values, explore their own spirituality and relate Christian teaching to their own experiences. Children make good progress, as evidenced in speaking and listening books, RE books and in verbal responses to the creative and challenging teaching. Teachers' understanding and consistently good or outstanding teaching of a range of enquiry based lessons ensures good outcomes for all pupils. These are presented termly to the vision and values committee. Many classes exceed the aspirational target set by the senior leaders and data analysis shows that children's attainment in RE far exceeds that of English in every cohort. Experiences include visits to places of worship, visitors in school, and RE taught through art and drama. There is a strong link between English and RE, particularly in upper key stage two, where pupils write in depth. In response to marking, children answer questions based on both knowledge of religion and what it means to them. The vision for RE includes more of a balance between written work and experiential lessons to develop vocabulary and the ability to speak about religious ideas and faith. The subject leader's strong leadership, action planning and vision for RE builds teachers' confidence and skills. Staff are supported with a bank of questions that extend the children's learning within lessons. Regular book scrutiny and training at staff meetings ensures that good practice is developed and shared. Assessment, monitoring and evaluation processes are increasingly rigorous and inform improvement. Action planning by the RE co-ordinator has led to improvement in provision. One to one feedback with teachers led some to teach RE in discrete weekly lessons as opposed to in blocks at the end of term. Marking procedures, however, are not consistently linked to RE skills. Parents give examples of how RE lessons contribute to spiritual and social development, as they help children deal with issues such as anxiety and loss. RE also has a positive influence on their children's behaviour stating that 'they are learning to become good citizens with a growing respect for themselves and others.'

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

The headteacher's strong Christian leadership and dynamic promotion of Christian values is very effectively supported by the two assistant headteachers. The senior leaders and governors are clearly committed to providing all pupils, regardless of their background and ability, with the very best education firmly rooted in a strong, overtly Christian ethos. Their desire that children realise their God-given potential is shared by governors and staff, motivating everyone to do their very best. The lengths that the school goes to, in ensuring that all pupils attend regularly, engage fully and behave appropriately are substantial and inspirational. RE is given very high priority as a core subject and collective worship is central to the school's teaching of SMSC and Christian values. These values influence key policies and practices. The team is leading the whole school on a personal journey with God. Staff openly stated how working at this school has had an impact on their individual walk with God. One teacher shared how she was confirmed along with some of the pupils, such was her response to her personal encounter with God during collective worship. The headteacher spoke passionately about how all staff go above and beyond to support families, listen to them and allay any concerns they may have. This was strongly reinforced by parents who stated that 'nothing was too much trouble' for the headteacher and her staff. Whereas parents said that the school did not force Christian ideals on them, all felt that it was the school's Christian ethos that was making their children feel happy and secure. The governors have a very clear and defined role, recruiting staff who fully support the school's Christian vision and ethos. They are vigilant and visible and are well equipped to hold the school to account for its performance and its distinctively Christian character. In addition, they offer their full support to the senior leadership team and teaching staff, one even acting as a wellbeing governor for the headteacher. Many governors actively get involved in the day to day life of the school. They become mentors for a small mixed age group of children and attend termly lunches where they can develop relationships that last all year. The fact that all adults in the school community, including the cleaners and site manager, take on this role, shows that relationships are strong. All are invested in the wellbeing of the pupils. There is mutual benefit in the links between church and school through prayerful support and church based Eucharist classes which are well attended. The school facilitates the church running Ozzie's after school club, which fosters strong links with the church and further engages children on their spiritual journey. School self-evaluation is robust and informative. The governing body and senior leaders use this to develop convincing and effective strategies for church school improvement. They are always seeking ways to improve and sustain the vision for future leaders with succession planning that will secure the Christian character in years to come.